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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000828

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/OP/NEA
LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: MAOISTS ATTACK CIVILIAN VEHICLES AS COMPLIANCE
WITH GENERAL STRIKE ERODES

REFS: A) KATHMANDU 813, B) KATHMANDU 804

11. (SBU) Summary. Kathmandu continued to move toward normalcy on the fourth day of the Maoists' five-day general strike with traffic even heavier than yesterday. A bomb went off April 26 injuring two on a bus about one kilometer from the Embassy, while on April 25 Maoists bombed a private residence and a taxi, wounding the driver and a passer-by. Police arrested one man carrying a bomb in his jacket. A local journalist who canvassed Kathmandu Valley residents during the strike found increasing frustration at the costs the insurgency levied on working people and the economy. Post confirmed as false press reports that on April 25 Maoists had left a bomb on the street near the Embassy and had attacked remote Red Cross and foreign aid offices and a Kathmandu orphanage. By bombing public conveyances the Maoists hope to make good on their promises to enforce the strike, but so far to little effect. End Summary.

Fourth Day Busier, But Marred By Bombings

12. (U) April 26 marked the fourth day of a five-day general strike, or "bandh," called by Maoist insurgents. Traffic in the capital was heavier than previous days, more shops were open, and more people were out in the street (Refuels). A mid-day lull caused by heavy rains from a Spring storm was broken, violently, by a bombing in the vicinity of the private residence of Nepal's King and the Embassy.

Maoists Attack Public Conveyances in Kathmandu

13. (U) The bomb exploded on a public bus at about 3:00 p.m. April 26 as it plied a main road in front of Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, approximately 100 meters south of the King's private home and one kilometer north of the Embassy. Two pedestrians suffered minor injuries and were seen at the nearby emergency room, according to a teaching hospital official. [Note: Initial reports had three passengers wounded.] At around 6:00 p.m. April 25, a bomb went off in a taxi in the Dhalkhu area of the capital. The driver and a 15-year-old pedestrian were wounded. Three people, including one woman, had hailed the driver, instructed him to take them to an intersection, and asked him to wait while they went to meet a friend. After about five minutes a bomb they had left behind in the taxi went off.

14. (U) Also on April 25, a bomb exploded outside a private residence in the city center, causing slight damage to a perimeter wall. On the same day police arrested a Maoist concealing a socket bomb in his jacket as he walked along a main road in the Boudha neighborhood.

More Citizens Stand Up

15. (U) In another show of defiance against the Maoists, a trade group organized a motorcycle rally April 26 to protest the 5-day general strike. A journalist for Nepal's leading daily newspaper told Poloff that he and his colleagues had spent the second and third days of the bandh criss-crossing the Kathmandu Valley on motorcycles talking to local residents, including bus and taxi drivers, storekeepers, farmers and students. They found a population increasingly angry at the Maoists' actions and frustrated by the mounting toll the insurgency was taking on the economy. Many found it increasingly difficult to feed themselves and their families.

Bad Press

16. (U) Misinformation carried the day April 26 at Nepal's English-language newspapers. The front page of the Himalayan Times featured a sidebar on a bomb that had allegedly been defused by security forces only 100 meters

north of the Embassy. In fact, police sources told us, a suspicious package thought to be a bomb was found in the street, but when security forces attempted to neutralize it with explosives, that package turned out to contain only garbage. The April 26 Kathmandu Post carried an erroneous story alleging that Maoists had attacked the Tehrathum district offices of German and British development agencies and the Nepal Red Cross. In actuality, Maoists had attacked a field office of an NGO - the Demali Society - affiliated with those organizations. Nothing on display would identify Demali as an affiliate of the Red Cross or other organization, however.

17. (U) An incident involving a bomb at an orphanage reported in the press and by police (Ref A) also turned out to be exaggerated. On April 25 Maoists threw a petrol bomb at a small bus traveling on Kathmandu's ring road. The bottle missed its target and smashed on the pavement. The perpetrators attempted to run away, but were chased by locals - and reportedly some of the orphans - into a building near the orphanage. Police arrived and took the bombers into custody. The press reported, erroneously, that the bomb had been defused inside the orphanage.

Comment

18. (SBU) By setting off bombs on taxis and buses, the Maoists are trying to make good on their promise to enforce the bandh. Their actions have not yet had the desired effect, however, as following the well-publicized April 25 taxi blast, even more cabs hit the street April 26. As the journalists' informal poll shows, Kathmandu residents have become increasingly frustrated with the costs the Maoists have imposed on Nepal's economy, society, and reputation. Many have begun to assert their rights, and many more have decided to get on with life despite the Maoists' threats.

MALINOWSKI